

BOOK REVIEW

IVES, W. G. H. and H. R. WONG. 1988. Tree and shrub insects of the prairie provinces. Information Report NOR-X-292. Northern Forestry Centre, Canadian Forestry Service, Edmonton, Alberta. T6H 3S5. 327 pages, 117 full page colored plates. Available at no charge to persons in the forest industry and educational institutes. ISBN0-662-15770-2.

Even though I am acknowledged in this book as one of the scientific reviewers, my contribution consisted primarily of proof-reading several drafts of computer-processed text that did not at all resemble the very attractive-looking finished product. I feel justified, therefore, in publicly reviewing it, particularly now that I have had a chance to browse through it and, more importantly, to use it. After the title page, the contents are succinctly described in an abstract, which is worth quoting directly,:

“More than 600 species of insects and mites that feed on trees and shrubs in the prairie provinces are discussed in terms of their distribution, hosts, and importance. There are approximately 1100 color photographs; the life cycle and damage of major pest species are illustrated, and for common species, primarily the larval stage is shown. Pests attacking coniferous hosts are separated from those attacking hardwoods, and each group is subdivided according to the type of feeding damage and type of insect involved. An extensive bibliography is provided. In addition to a taxonomic index listing the order and family of each insect and mite, there is a diagnostic index listing the host species, feeding site of the pest, and species of insect or mite involved and an insect index”.

Obviously, this is a major scientific work that should appeal to a wide cross-section of users such as students, professional entomologists and ecologists, anyone associated with forestry activities, and even the general public; hopefully, favorable responses from this large audience will generate a lot of good will for the Canadian Forestry Service.

Restrictions of support for insect identification services for provincial agencies prompted the need for this insect guide. However, it took the combined talents of an insect ecologist (W. G. I.) and an insect taxonomist (R. H. W.) to successfully surmount the nomenclatural problems that are bound to arise when dealing with so many species of insects and plants, and to bring together a formidable knowledge of tree and shrub insects of the prairie regions of Canada. No attempt was made to emphasize economically important insects so what we have here is an ecological check list of insects and mites, with descriptions and photographs, associated with native and introduced trees and shrubs of parklands, shelter belts, urban areas of the prairies and parts of the Boreal forest and sub-montane prairie. No claim is made that all insects are included but I believe that a very small proportion have been

missed; after all, both authors have had considerable experience in forest entomology and have had the time to build up large collections, make countless rearings, and record insect occurrences, over many years.

Even a cursory glance at the contents makes it apparent that a tremendous effort went into the production of this book. The two-column layout on standard letter-sized glossy paper is pleasing to the eye and individual species names stand out in bold type. The color plates are on the left hand page and refer only to the species covered on the right hand page, making this one of the easiest to use technical insect identification books I have encountered. All photographs are, in general, faithful renditions of the actual subjects. Text references consist of numbers that refer to items in a bibliography of 657 citations preceding the indices at the end of the book, and are given for species covered in each plate and discussed in the text. I would quibble about the correctness of the word "pest" as it is sometimes used, and I think that the inclusion of a photograph of an adult of a representative looper would have been useful, but these are minor points. The soft covers, though beautifully illustrated on the front with a full color painting of a *Malacosoma disstria* larva, will probably not hold up for very long; in any case, a valuable reference like this should be bound in hard covers.

Unbelievably, there is no charge for this publication. Yet most of my colleagues and myself would have gladly bought it for the \$75.00 or so per copy that it took to produce. It is a book to be looked at for its illustrations, read for its interesting biological information, and used as an identification guide. It should be on the bookshelf of every entomologist interested in ecological diversity, the beauty of insects and natural history. recommend it highly.

W. G. Evans
Department of Entomology
University of Alberta